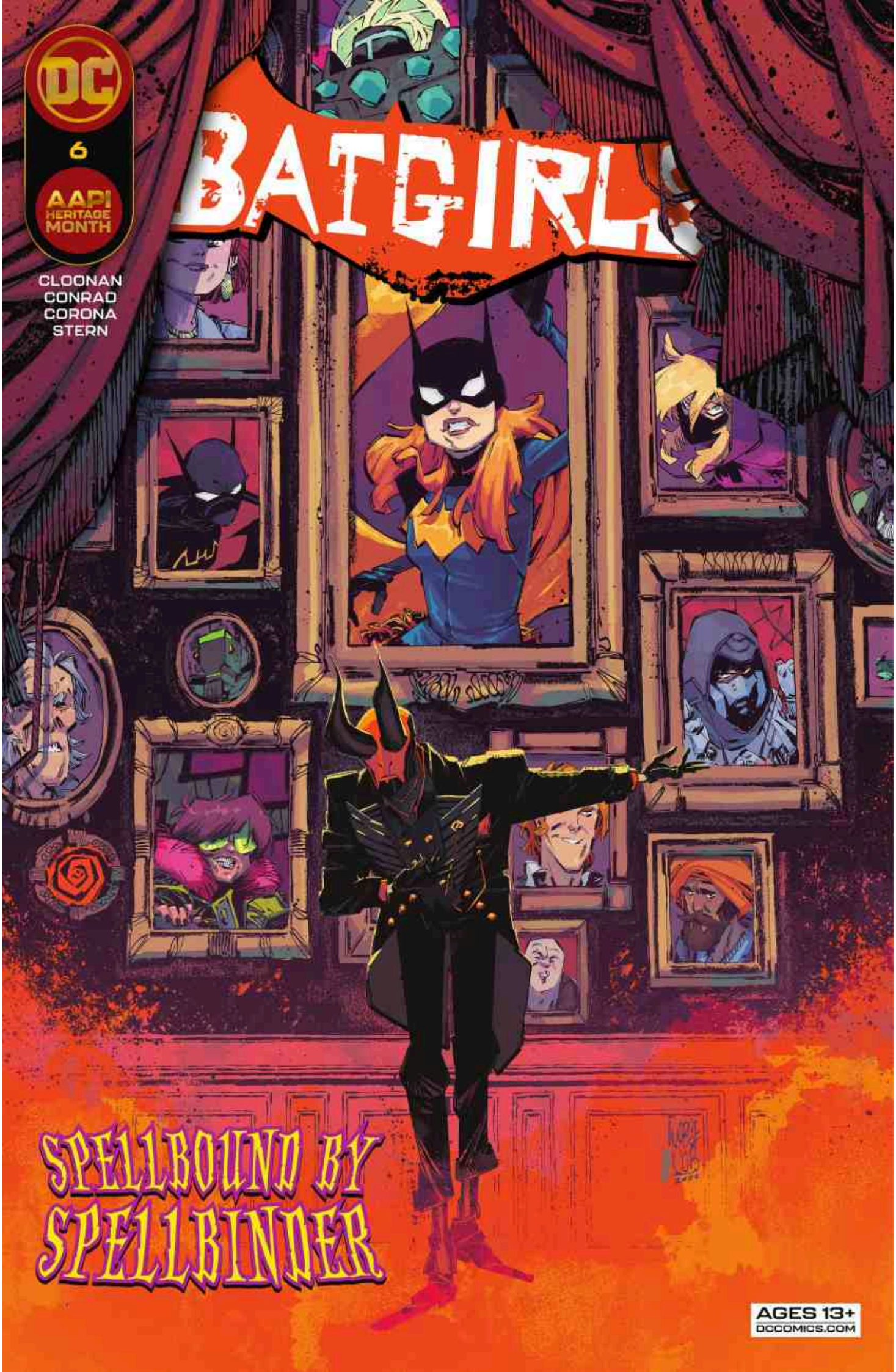
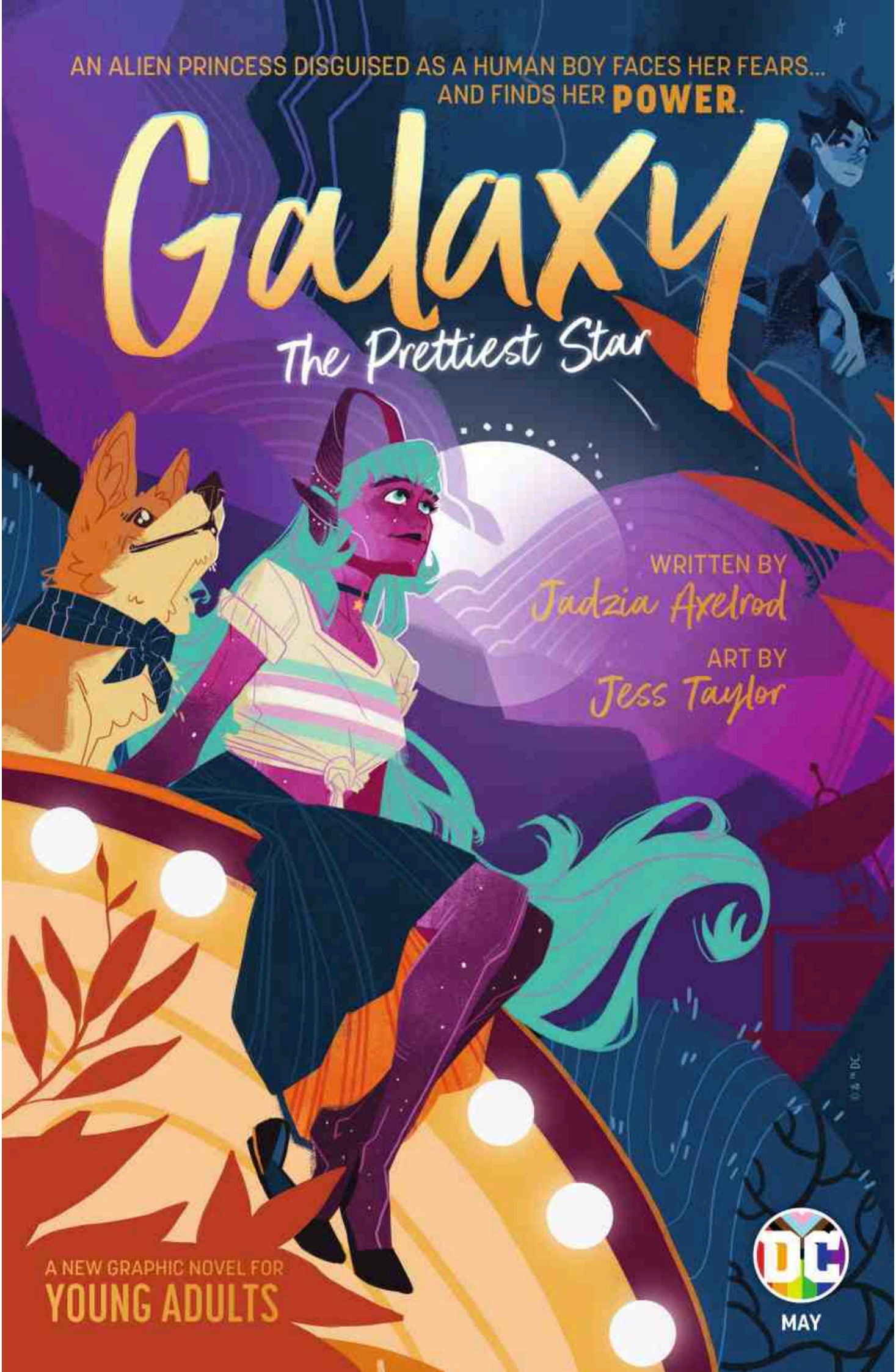

DC
6
AAPI HERITAGE MONTH
BATGIRL
CLOONAN
CONRAD
CORONA
STERN
SPELLBOUND BY SPELLBINDER
AGES 13+
DCCOMICS.COM


AN ALIEN PRINCESS DISGUISED AS A HUMAN BOY FACES HER FEARS...
AND FINDS HER POWER.
Galaxy
The Prettiest Star
WRITTEN BY
Jadzia Axelrod
ART BY
Jess Taylor
A NEW GRAPHIC NOVEL FOR
YOUNG ADULTS
MAY

THE PROBLEM WITH GOTHAM ISN'T THAT IT LACKS CULTURE.
QUITE THE OPPOSITE, IN FACT. WE'RE SIMPLY CONDITIONED NOT TO SEE IT.

WE ARE SPOON-FED WHAT TO THINK--EVERY IDEA, EVERY INANE OPINION. WE ARE KEPT BLIND TO THE THINGS THAT MATTER.
SO WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WITH TRUE AUTONOMY OF WILL?
WHY, THAT'S WHY ARKHAM WAS BUILT.

WORKING AT THE ASYLUM OPENED MY EYES TO THE TRUTH.
THESE PEOPLE AREN'T ILL--THEY'RE THE SANEST AMONG US!

I REALIZED CONVENTIONAL THERAPY WOULD NEVER WORK ON ARKHAM'S PATIENTS.
I NEEDED TO DEVISE A PURER WAY TO GET INTO THEIR HEADS.

THAT'S WHEN I DISCOVERED AN UNCANNY ABILITY TO CONNECT WITH THEM--
--THROUGH PORTRAITURE, NO LESS.

MY BRUSH-STROKES WORK IN TANDEM WITH A STRAIN OF FEAR GAS, ALTERED TO AFFECT MEMORY. THE EFFECT TRIGGERS VIVID FLASH-BACKS.
WHILE THE PROCESS ISN'T EASY TO ENDURE, IT ALLOWS THE PATIENTS TO TRULY SEE THEMSELVES IN MY ART...
...YOUR FRIEND STEPHANIE CAN ATTEST TO THE RESULTS, BARBARA.

The home of Charles Dante, a.k.a. Spellbinder.
TUTOR... HE'S YOUR PUPPET.
AHH, YES. A PROMISING ARTIST WITH AN AUDIENCE I COULD NEVER QUITE REACH.
I ADMIT THAT I'VE BEEN PULLING HIS STRINGS. BUT I ASSURE YOU, OURS IS A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIP.
TO WHAT END? WHY CONTROL ALL THESE PEOPLE?
That's it, Babs.

Keep him talking.
Villains love monologue-ing.
SHK

POLITICIANS, CORPORATE MEDIA, ADVERTISEMENTS, INFLUENCERS--PEOPLE NEED TO BE LED. WITHOUT GUIDANCE, SOCIETY FALLS INTO CHAOS.
LUX ET VERITAS. I AM HERE TO SHEPHERD GOTHAM TOWARD THE TRUTH...
...AND WHAT TRUTH IS MORE NOBLE THAN ART?

AND YOU, BARBARA.
YOU SHALL BE MY MASTERPIECE.

SAVE IT FOR THE PAROLE HEARING.

NO! YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT!
RIIP
I'LL GIVE YOU WHAT IT'S WORTH...
...NOTHING!
KRAK
GAH!
A NOBLE EFFORT. BUT THERE IS LITTLE MORE YOU CAN DO TIED TO A CHAIR--
OH REALLY?

GUESS YOU MISSED A LOT.
WHA-THUMP
I'VE TRAINED MY UPPER BODY FOR YEARS.
I'M IN MY ELEMENT.
KRAK
UNGH!
HA. STILL AS WILLFUL AS EVER.
YOU ALWAYS WERE MY FAVORITE GIRLFRIEND--
WE WERE NEVER OFFICIAL!
WHAM
DON'T TALK LIKE YOU KNOW ME. YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH!
I DIDN'T WANT TO DO THIS--
--BUT YOU LEAVE ME NO CHOICE--
SSSHHK!
THAT'S IT. LOSE YOURSELF IN MEMORIES...
KOFF KOFF KOFF

DC COMICS
PROUDLY PRESENTS
BATGIRLS
ONE WAY OR ANOTHER
PART 6 OF 6
BECKY CLOONAN & MICHAEL W. CONRAD
STORY
JORGE CORONA
ART
SARAH STERN
COLORS
BECCA CAREY
LETTERS
CORONA WITH STERN
COVER
MICHAEL CHO
VARIANT COVER
RIAN GONZALES
1:25 VARIANT COVER
JESSICA BERBEY
ASSISTANT EDITOR
JESSICA CHEN
EDITOR
BEN ABERNATHY
GROUP EDITOR
BATMAN CREATED BY
BOB KANE WITH BILL FINGER
Meanwhile, across town, Steph is in hot water at the old Arkham Asylum.
Metaphorically speaking.
WHERE'S YOUR LITTLE FRIEND? LOOKS LIKE I'VE FINALLY GOT YOU ALONE.
BUDDY, I HATE TO BREAK IT TO YOU, BUT YOU'RE AT A REAL DISADVANTAGE HERE.
THE BEATING I'M GONNA PUT ON YOU WILL WALK THE LINE OF ACCEPTABLE FORCE...AND THERE'S NO ONE HERE TO STOP ME.
VZZT
VZZZT
WE'LL :WHEEZE: SEE.
ELECTRO-SHOCK THERAPY. OFTEN DISMISSED AS ARCHAIC, BUT IN YOUR CASE...
:WHEEZE:
VZZT
...I THINK IT COULD DO SOME GOOD.

DID THE FEAR GAS DO *THAT* TO YOU?
WHAT?
KA-KRASH
DO MY SCARS :HUFF: *SCARE* YOU?
NO. THEY LOOK COOL.
IT'S EVERYTHING *ELSE* ABOUT YOU I DON'T LIKE.
DEPROGRAMMING PEOPLE SOMETIMES MEANS ENTERING :KOFF: MINDS UNINVITED.
IT'S IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS.
DO YOU *HEAR* YOURSELF?
YOU MESS WITH PEOPLE'S MINDS WITHOUT CONSENT! YOU'RE A *VILLAIN,* DUDE.
AS FOR ME...
...I'VE *ALWAYS* BEEN AN OUTSIDER.
NO ONE PROGRAMMED ME-- I'M "BROKEN"! AND I'M *PERFECTLY OKAY* WITH THAT.
I *LIKE* ME.

CITIZENS OF GOTHAM! THIS IS GRACE O'HALLORAN REPORTING!
WE ARE GATHERED HERE TODAY OUTSIDE OF ARKHAM ASYLUM TO WITNESS THE BIRTH OF A NEW UM... GOTHAM!
COME, ROKY. WE MUST GET HIGHER!
THERE ARE TOO MANY OF THEM.
ORACLE, BATGIRL, DO YOU COPY?
GRACE, ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
SURE AS GATORS IN SLAUGHTER SWAMP!
TONIGHT WE TAKE IT BACK. TONIGHT, WE'RE AT THE TIP OF THE SPEAR, THE FRONT LINE OF REVOLUTION!
OUR SACRIFICE, OUR BLOOD--OUR VERY BONES WILL LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR A FREE CITY!
ONE THAT RESPECTS ITS CITIZENS! ONE THAT DELIVERS A BRUTAL DEATH TO OUR OPPRESSORS, AND A REVITALIZATION OF INDEPENDENT THINKING!
ONE THAT EMBRACES THE SELF, UNDER TUTOR...
...AND BRINGS AN END TO THE BAT REGIME!
DOES ANYONE COPY?

As it happens, Steph *does* copy-- she's just busy.
SZZT
ENOUGH OF THIS!
OOUF!
ANSWER :KOFF: HONESTLY. DO YOU **REALLY** THINK YOU'RE FREE?
THIS ISN'T FREEDOM, IT'S A VIOLATION. **NO ONE** ASKED YOU TO DO THIS.
MY TURN TO ASK QUESTIONS.
PAK
WE KNOW ABOUT YOU AND **CHARLES DANTE!**
IT'S ALL IN YOUR **FILE!**
TH-THAT'S :WHEEZE: **CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION!**
THE OTHER DOCTORS DIDN'T UNDERSTAND. DANTE WAS HELPING ME...HE SAID MY ART **SPOKE** TO HIM--HE RECOGNIZED THE **TRUTH** IN MY **VISIONS!**
HE SAW THAT MY PARANOIA WASN'T JUST A DELUSION! AND WHEN HE PAINTED MY PORTRAIT...
...SPELLBINDER FIXED ME!
AHHH!
SHZZZT

"AND ARKHAM IS WHERE IT STARTED!"
JUST AS THE MAGISTRATE FELL, SO TOO SHALL--
OOF!
GRACE-- NO!
FZZT
RISE!
RISE!
--FOLLOW THE BATS, FIND WHO'S RUNNING THE SHOOOOOW--
SOMEBODY SAVE HER!
AAAAAHH! BATMAN!
BAT GIRL.

KRASH
YOUR TIMING IS PERFECT, AS ALWAYS.
IT IS?
YEAH.
IT IS!
HURK!
WHA-THUDD
AFTER THEM, MY STUDENTS!
KOFF KOFF
SHOW THEM WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED!
ROKY! YOU BETTER BE FILMING THIS!
BATGIRL, GO LONG!
"TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE, BARBARA..."

POUR YOURSELF INTO ME--YOUR PAIN, YOUR FEARS. I WANT TO KNOW ALL OF IT.
YOU :KOFF: WANT TO TALK ABOUT PAIN?
This isn't Babs' first rodeo. She's been hit with fear gas more than once. She knows what to expect--even so, it's not pleasant.
WHERE SHOULD I START?
HOW ABOUT HERE?
WHACK
WHACK
--BEING ROUTINELY UNDERESTIMATED BY PEOPLE LIKE YOU WHO THINK THEY KNOW WHAT'S BEST FOR ME!
WHACK
AS IF I DON'T KNOW MYSELF!
I'VE FACED SO MUCH WORSE THAN ANY VISION FROM YOUR TOXIC GAS WILL EVER BE.
PAIN IS AN OLD FRIEND. AND AS FOR FEAR...
HNG...
...I THRIVE ON OVERCOMING IT.
ONCE I HACK THIS THING, EVERYONE WILL KNOW WHO YOU REALLY ARE, CHARLES.

CITIZENS OF GOTHAM, THIS IS ORACLE HERE, GIVING YOU THE FINAL LIVESTREAM FROM TUROR'S ACCOUNT.
LIKE TUTOR, YOU HAVE BEEN MISLED AND MANIPULATED.
BY THIS MAN, CHARLES DANTE--HE CALLS HIMSELF SPELLBINDER!
MANY OF YOU SENT HIM YOUR PHOTOGRAPH UNDER THE GUISE OF PARTICIPATING IN ART THERAPY, OR SIMPLY TO BE THE SUBJECT OF ONE OF HIS PAINTINGS.
YOU HAD NO WAY TO KNOW THIS SET THE STAGE FOR HIS MANIPULATIONS.
HE USED A POTENT MEMORY GAS ALONG WITH HIS ART TO GET INTO YOUR HEADS, FEEDING YOU SUBLIMINAL MESSAGES THROUGH TUTOR'S ACCOUNT.
HE WAS INFLUENCING THE INFLUENCER--A SCHEME SO SUBTLE, NOBODY NOTICED UNTIL IT WAS ALMOST TOO LATE.
BUT THIS KIND OF BRAINWASHING CAN BE UNDONE.
THE TOXINS WILL WEAR OFF IN TIME, BUT IT WILL TAKE WORK TO UNDO HIS MANIPULATIONS.
SMASH
REMEMBER: YOU ARE IN CONTROL. THE CITY IS YOURS TO DEFINE THROUGH YOUR DEEDS.
YOU ARE, AND WILL REMAIN, FREE.
GRACE! GOOD GOSH, YOU'RE ALIVE!
TELL ME YOU GOT ALL THAT ON CAMERA.
BATGIRLS, YOU TWO WRAPPING THINGS UP OVER THERE?
ORACLE, SO GOOD TO HEAR YOUR VOICE!
AND YEAH, WRAPPED IS A GOOD WAY TO PUT IT.
WE CAUGHT THE LIVESTREAM--WHAT'S THE PLAN? THESE FOLKS ARE STILL KINDA GEEKED.

KEEP EVERYONE THERE. I BELIEVE I'VE FOUND AN ANTIDOTE FOR THE GAS-- DANTE WAS AFRAID TO TAKE HIS OWN TREATMENT.
HE MUST'VE KNOWN THIS STUFF CAN HAVE SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS.
I'LL BE OVER SOON TO ADMINISTER THE ANTITOXIN.
UNGH, MY HEAD..
WHERE AM I? WHAT-- WHAT WAS I DOING?
YOU'RE SAFE. HELP IS COMING.
TUTOR, THAT RAT. HE THINKS HE CAN ESCAPE.

A FREE GOTHAM. :HUFF: I'M PREPARED TO DIE FOR THE CAUSE...
...AND SO WILL ALL OF YOU!

THE DESTRUCTION OF ARKHAM--A MURAL PAINTED WITH THE BLOOD OF ITS CITIZENS! THEY WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER--

OH NO. I THINK HE'S GOT SOME KIND OF EXPLOSIVE...
CASS-- GO. NOW!

KRACKLE

UNGH!

I KNOW THE HURT, WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE USED.
YOU CAN STOP.
IT WAS ALL DANTE--
N-NO, IT WAS MY ART, :WHEEZE: MY MESSAGE!

THEN YOU'RE A FOOL.

IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYWAY. THE COUNTDOWN CAN'T BE STOPPED--
--I'VE RIGGED ENOUGH C-4 TO THIS THING TO TURN AN ENTIRE CITY BLOCK INTO A CRATER!
WHUD
HA HA-- UNGH! IT'S TOO LATE--
WHACK

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE.
RIIIP

BATGIRL--
I'M OPEN!
GOT IT!
NOW WHAT DO I DO?!
BONDO!

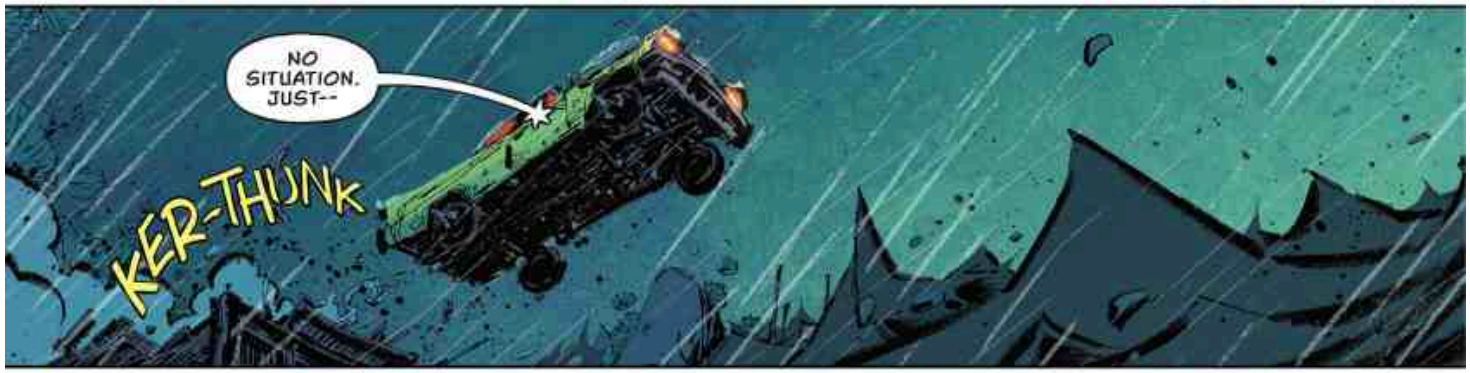
SKREEE
It should be noted that Steph doesn't like to drive.
She's more comfortable being a copilot, a navigator, a ride-or-die road dog.
Not for lack of confidence-it's simply a matter of preference.
Even now, pedal to the floor and time bomb on her shoulder, Steph wishes Cass were driving. That is...
VROOOOOMMM
...until the moment the deck plays, and she remembers she's an *all-star*.
00:26

WAS THAT A BOMB? ARE YOU SEEING THIS?! THEY'RE HEADED TO THE DOCKS! WHO'S IN THE CAR?
BATGIRL...

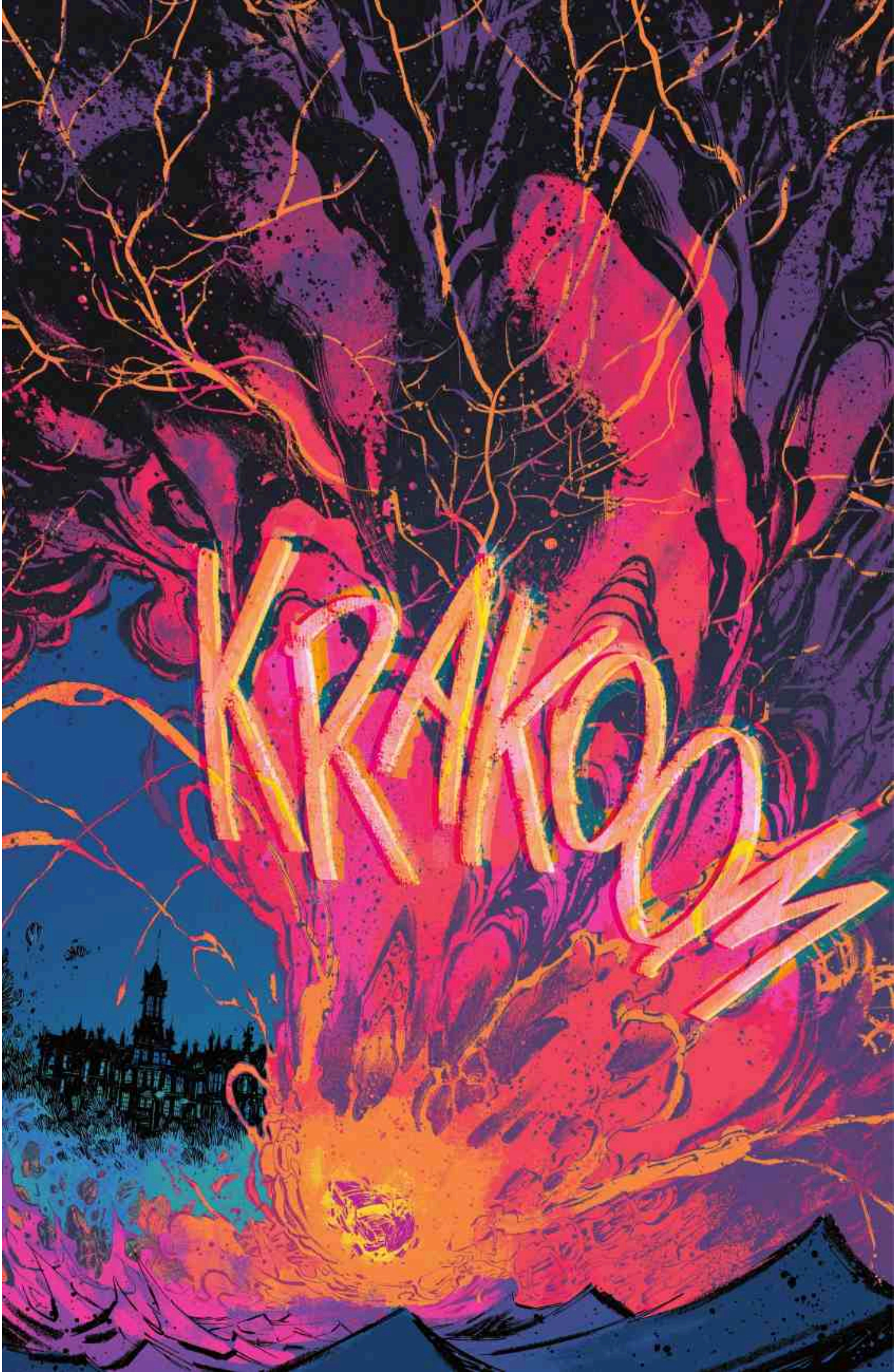
VRMMMM

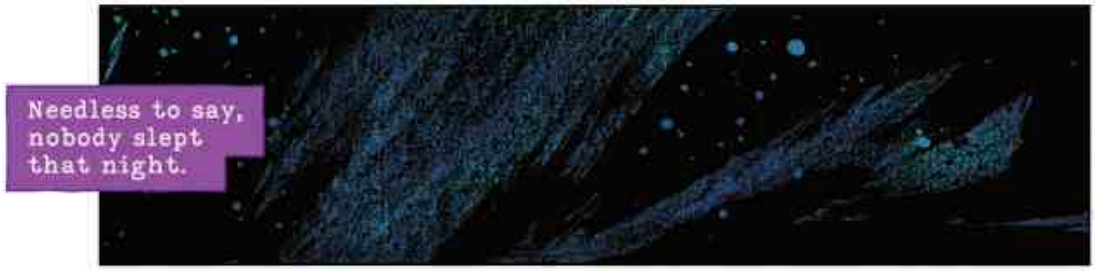
ORACLE, BATGIRL--DO YOU COPY?
00:10

YES. I COPY.
LOUD AND CLEAR, BATGIRL. WHAT'S THE SITUATION?


NO SITUATION. JUST--
KER-THUNK

--I LOVE YOU. OVER AND OUT.


KAOZ


Needless to say, nobody slept that night.

The Loft, Batgirls HQ.
I KNOW YOU'RE SAD...
YES. I AM.

I'M SORRY, CASS.
SOMETIMES THINGS HAPPEN, THINGS OUT OF OUR CONTROL. THERE WAS NOTHING YOU COULD HAVE DONE...

WHAT AM I MISSING?

CASS IS STILL SAD ABOUT BONDAGE.
BONDO.

YEAH, I AM TOO. BUT HEY--AT LEAST NOBODY DIED?
NOBODY EXCEPT BONDO.

Y'KNOW... I KINDA GET IT.
EVERYONE FEELS SO BROKEN RIGHT NOW.
IT'S EASY TO BELIEVE SOMEONE ELSE HAS ALL THE ANSWERS.
LIKE, SOMEONE ELSE CAN TEACH YOU HOW TO FEEL OKAY.
SOME PEOPLE'S WOUNDS DON'T HEAL.
THEY AREN'T BEYOND HOPE, BUT THEY DON'T ALWAYS GET THE HELP THEY NEED.
I UNDERSTAND THAT.
I HAVE WOUNDS.
SAME.
YEAH, ME TOO.
BUT AT LEAST I HAVE...
...YOU!

THIS IS GRACE O'HALLORAN, REPORTING LIVE FROM THE GREAT CITY OF GOTHAM.
LAST NIGHT, WE LEARNED HOW EASILY WE LET OUR OWN FREE WILL SLIP AWAY, INTO THE GRASP OF THOSE GREEDY FOR CONTROL.
THE CURTAIN WAS PULLED BACK, REVEALING NOT JUST A VILLAIN, BUT OUR OWN SUSCEPTIBILITY TO BAD INFLUENCES.
5'8"
5'4"
WE MUST STAY VIGILANT.
NOT JUST FOR OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS, BUT FOR THOSE WHO TOO OFTEN GO OVERLOOKED.
THE ONES WHO SLIP THROUGH THE CRACKS.
The Tower, Gotham.
IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANY OF US. THE ONLY REASON IT WASN'T-- THE ONLY REASON WE'RE ALIVE TODAY--
--IS BECAUSE OF THE BATGIRLS!
THAT'S RIGHT, I SAID IT!
NOT ONLY DID THEY HELP ADMINISTER AN ANTIDOTE TO THE FEAR TOXIN, BUT ONE OF THEM ALLEGEDLY GAVE HER LIFE STOPPING A BOMB...
HAH. THIS FOOD IS BOMB.
SO BOMB.
THE BATGIRLS--

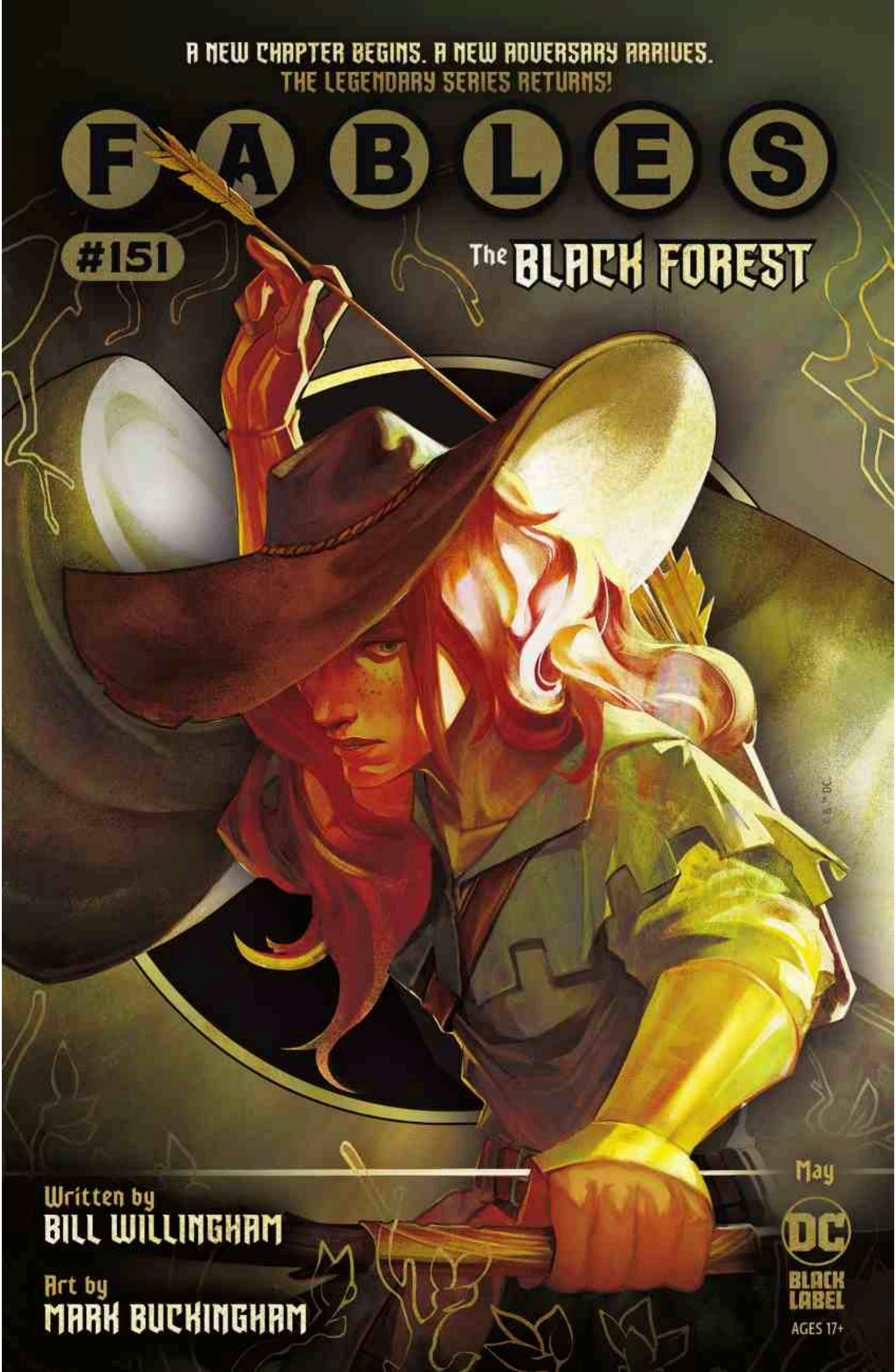
BAAATGIIIRRRLSSSS--
IT'S SEER AGAIN! TRYING TO HACK INTO OUR TRANSMISSION--
QUICK, UNPLUG THE TV!
SORRY, BAD HABIT.
GOTTA HAND IT TO YA, YOU MADE THIS PLACE PRETTY HARD TO FIND. BUT I MADE IT!
BATGIRLS...
...I NEED YOUR HELP!
NEXT: BREAK-IN AT THE ICEBERG LOUNGE!

A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS. A NEW ADVERSARY ARRIVES.
THE LEGENDARY SERIES RETURNS!

FABLES

#151

The BLACK FOREST



Written by
BILL WILLINGHAM

Art by
MARK BUCKINGHAM

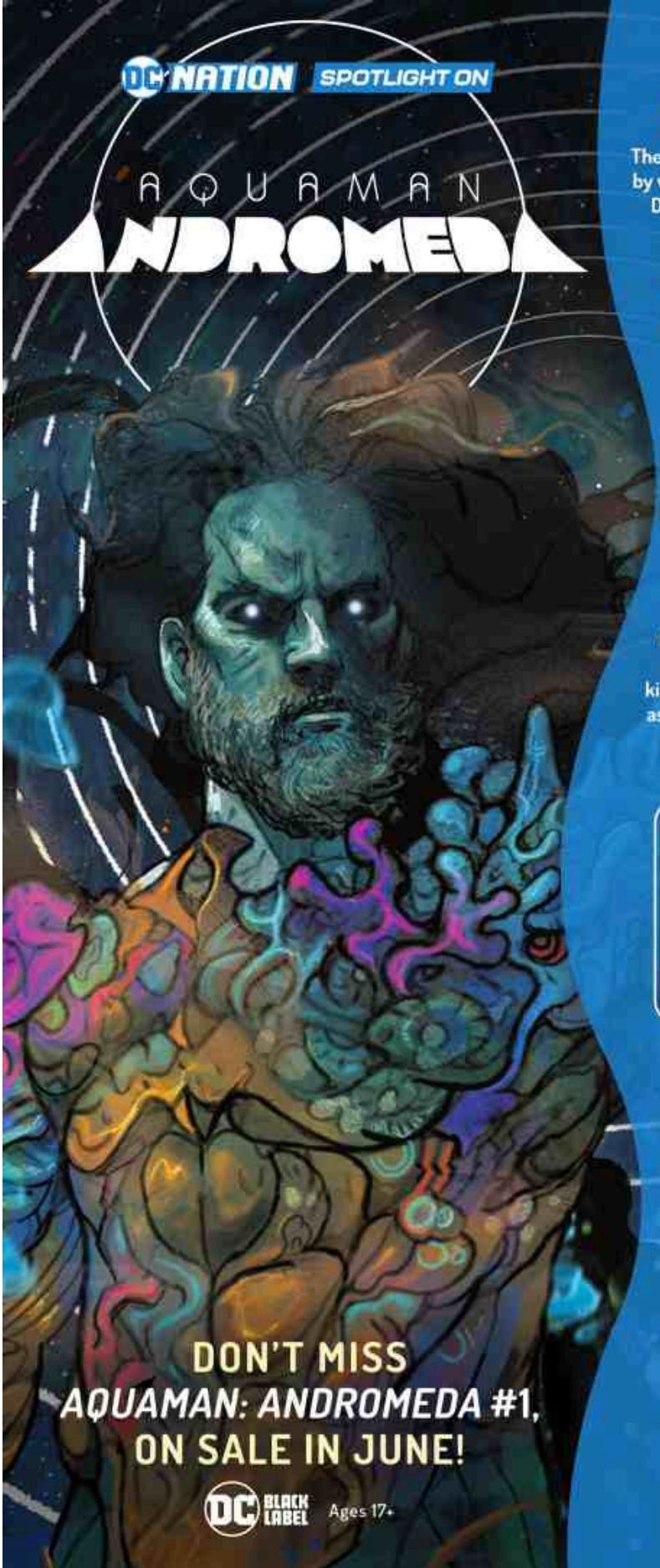
May

DC BLACK LABEL

AGES 17+

DC NATION SPOTLIGHT ON

AQUAMAN ANDROMEDA



INTERVIEW WITH RAM V AND CHRISTIAN WARD

The King of Atlantis meets cosmic horror in *Aquaman: Andromeda* by writer Ram V and artist Christian Ward. In this new three-issue DC Black Label series, a massive, mysterious structure has been discovered at the most remote point on Earth... and it seems like it's waking up.

What's the high-concept pitch for *Aquaman: Andromeda*?

Ram V: *Aquaman: Andromeda* follows a crew of scientists sent in to investigate an unidentified object landing at Point Nemo in the Pacific. In the course of this, they encounter the creature that landed in the ocean—but they also have first contact with Aquaman, who has been brought there for mysterious reasons.

As we'll go on to discover, being underwater in the ocean accounts for a lot of pressure, and the things we tried to drown in our past begin to resurface once again.

In what ways do Aquaman and his world lend themselves to horror?

Christian Ward: For me, the ocean is an incredibly terrifying place. Essentially, it's outer space on Earth. Aquaman is the king of this place, so it made natural sense to use the terrifying aspects of that alien environment to bring out the horror—and of course, Aquaman exists within that. So we've leaned on that to do something quite scary.

Ram, how did you come up with the mysterious entity the crew discovers in this series?

V: The creature actually comes from DC history and lore. Part of what I love about comics is that it genuinely feels like a 100-year-old tapestry that everyone's worked on, and you get to come in and have your time with it for a while. I really enjoy going back to decades of history and picking out one thing—"Why hasn't anyone used this?"

Christian, how did you balance your flair for bright colors with the dark depths of the ocean?

Ward: This is a book of two halves. You've got your big, bombastic action sequences—which are so thrilling to draw, and incredibly thrilling to read. But it's also a book with very quiet, but quite intense, very psychological moments. There's a flashback sequence that's very muted, but I think out of the whole book, for all of the big moments, that's probably my favorite sequence.

DON'T MISS *AQUAMAN: ANDROMEDA* #1, ON SALE IN JUNE!

DC BLACK LABEL Ages 17+

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SON OF ULTRON